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## PSYCHOLOGY.

**The Sense of Taste in a Sea-Anemone.**—It is a well known fact that sea-anemones possess a faculty which enables them to recognize food. This sense has been recently studied by M. Nagel of the Zoological Station at Naples. The following is one of his experiments. A small piece of sardine was gently pushed toward the tentacles of a sea-anemone; the morsel was first touched, then seized, then swallowed. A small ball of blotting-paper, similar in appearance, saturated with sea-water was next offered, but it was not taken. The paper was then saturated with the juice of the fish, when it was seized with the same avidity as the bit of sardine, but often it was rejected after the lapse of a few moments.

When the blotting-paper is impregnated with quinine the tentacles recoil. The quinine does not affect the external surface of the body, except the part situated between the tentacles and the mouth. If food is placed in the mouth, or near the open mouth, the animal does not notice it, but will only take it when the tentacles have touched it. The sense of taste, then, is localized in the tentacles, which serve as organs of touch; and also appreciate changes of temperature. (*Revue Scientifique*, Dec. 1892.)

**M. Vaillant on the Feeding of Snakes.**—In a paper read before the *Academie des Sciences de Paris*, M. Léon Vaillant made the following interesting remarks concerning the alimentation of Snakes. These remarks were the result of a series of observations of a large Anaconda from South America, *Eunectes murinus*, one of the Boidae, about 6 meters long, which, contrary to the usual habits of this species accepted food very soon after its arrival at the menagerie of the Reptiles of the Museum, and has continued to eat with regularity up to the present time. In fact, since its entrance into the Jardin des Plantes, August 8, 1885, until the end of the year 1891, this serpent has eaten 34 times, or about 5 times a year. Its food has generally been small or young goats; three times it took a hare and once a goose. The intervals between the times of feeding have varied from 23 days to 204 days; this last interval occurred but once. The snake decided for itself the time for feeding, manifesting its desire by increased activity, and by other signs.

As to quantity of food, in order to avoid all accidents which might result from indigestion, the Anaconda was given animals of moderate size; the largest it has swallowed is a kid of about 12 kilograms weight; which represents one sixth the weight of the snake. There is no doubt, however, that in a wild state, a snake of its size could swallow animals three or four times as large.

M. Vaillant adds, in this connection, the following fact which shows the stretching capacity of certain snakes. In the menagerie of the museum, a viper from France, (*Pelias berus*) had to be put in the same cage with a horned viper, (*Cerastes*.) As the individuals, although they belonged to different species, were about the same size, it was supposed that they would live peaceably together. It was a mistake. During the following night the *Cerastes* swallowed the *Pelias berus*, and in order to accommodate himself to his huge prey, his body was distended so that the scales which touch each other laterally, and even lap in its normal state were now so spread apart that between the longitudinal rows, a bare space equal in size to the scales was left. Digestion went on regularly, however, and the *Cerastes* did not appear to suffer.

The author also remarked that snakes in general do not accept indifferently all sorts of food, but appear to exercise a choice. It is often difficult to induce a snake to take food for the first time, but once this is accomplished, it accepts more readily succeeding proffers. A *Pelophilus madagascariensis* has been known to refuse a variety of food for 22 months, when it ate a starling, then a few other small birds and finally some rats, which are still fed to him without any difficulty, although previously they had been offered to him in vain.

M. Vaillant also remarks that the residue of digestion are evacuated at a single time after each feeding, at the end of a certain number of days. However, it often happens that the fæces contain the residue of a former meal. (Revue Scientific, aont, 1892.)